



SOUTHEAST NEWS

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Sixteen United Church of Christ Women

See Both Violence and Hope as South Africa

Moves Towards Free Elections

A "Third Force" may be appearing on the South African scene, but not as a new political party competing for power in the country's first multiracial elections next year. The "Third Force," many South Africans believe, is a coalition of white extremists and African tribal politicians who want to abort South African democratic transition to majority rule.

This was what a delegation of 16 women from the United Church of Christ learned when they visited the strife-torn country August 11-24th. The women were from diverse ethnic backgrounds and ranged in age from 14 to 80.

The delegates visited 17 cities and towns. At almost every stop, they said that religious and political leaders told them that the "Third Force" was largely responsible for the escalation of violence across the country. The first and second forces in South Africa are the African National Congress led by Nelson Mandela, and the South African government of President F. W. de Klerk.

The "Third Force" is an alliance of white supremacists ... including neo-Nazis and their sympathizers in the South African security forces ... who bitterly oppose De Klerk's reversal of apartheid, and officials of the African tribal homelands created by the apartheid system. The tribal leaders stand to lose power if a strong multiracial government is elected next year.

"Everywhere there is a sense of foreboding, and expectation of new violence," said delegate Mary Sue Gast, executive direction of the United Church's Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society. "Sixty-eight people were killed in Soweto in our first week in South Africa. Five to ten people were killed every day in Natal province," said Gast. "Overwhelmingly, those who fire on trains and buses or into public gathering are widely believed to be hired by the "Third Force."

The Rev. Yvonne Beasley, associate minister of the United Church's regional Southern Conference, said that the group witnessed devastation throughout the country. According to Beasley, one settlement near Durban, founded before World War I by Mahatma Gandhi as a cooperative multiracial community, had been nearly destroyed by firebomb attacks.

"We visited the homeless women and children," said Beasley, who lives in Durham, NC. "As evening fell, they were gathering their few belongings, trying to decide where they could find a safe space to spend the night. The area was not safe. I met one woman who had lost most of her family."

But the delegates also said there was hope for South Africa's future. Interracial women's organizations ... like the YWCA, Christian Women's Movement and Black Sash ... are "right on the edge," Beasley said. She added that the women's movement is now busy with voter education, especially for black South Africans who have never had an opportunity to vote in an election. Churches, which have resisted apartheid for years, are now beginning to face the challenge of desegregating their own congregations.

"We were humbled by the women we met in South Africa," said Gast. "We met women who had grown old and never voted, but were training younger women in the mechanics of voting. We met women who have been overlooked all their lives by a system that exploited their manual labor, but still had the strength to educate themselves, and then to teach, nurture and organize others."

In meetings with the South African Council of Churches, one of the groups that led the first against apartheid when the African National Congress was still banned by the government, the United Church delegates were told that despite progress towards free elections, sanctions should not be lifted until a multiracial transitional executive council is installed.

Those who attended from the Southeast Conference, UCC were Rev. Frances Bryant of Powder Springs, Georgia; Yvonne Beasley of Durham, North Carolina; and Dollie Burwell of Warrenton, North Carolina.

Best Wishes For a Joyous & Christ-Filled Holiday Season

from

Roger D. Knight, Conference Minister

Mitchell C. Johnson, Associate Conference Minister

Barbara J. O'Connor, Office Administrator

Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta sends Visitor to Nicaragua

From July 15th to the 25th, Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta, Georgia had one of its congregation in Nicaragua. Jerry Plante went to Nicaragua to further develop the church's relationship with its "adopted" missionary, Bob Molsberry.

Bob and his family (Ann, Ames and Kate) are in Nicaragua working in a Mennonite Central Committee project to develop community outreach programs in local churches. In April, Pilgrimage's pastor, Tim Morrison, put forth a challenge to the church for someone to go visit with the Molsberrys and come back with a first hand account of Bob's work and faith. Bob's agenda for these 10 days included visits to church projects across Nicaragua, exposure to the current economic and

political situation, and time joining in with other missionaries on discussions of where Christian service leads those committed Christians who are today's missionaries.

The Molsberry family has been chosen for November 14th in the 1993/94 "In Mission" calendar of prayer prepared by the UCC Board of Homeland and World Ministries.

Super Bowl Provides Church Opportunities

Atlanta will be the host city for the national Football League's Super Bowl on January 30, 1994. The Super Bowl is the largest single sporting event in the United States each year. Hundreds of thousands of people will be in Atlanta for a myriad of Super Bowl activities. The attention of the nation will be focused upon the capital city and the entire state.

Already, hundreds of churches and thousands of Christians are being mobilized to prepare for an effective witness throughout the state during the Super Bowl season. Scores of professional athletes, entertainers and speakers with special appeal to youth are being assimilated to speak in school assemblies and youth rallies.

Special meals featuring high profile athletes are also being planned for the business community. A special video is being prepared for families who want to reach out to their friends by hosting Super Bowl parties in their homes. This same video will be available to churches that wish to plan a special event, capitalizing on the Super Bowl idea.

One of the special opportunities available to churches revolves around the idea of literature distribution. A Super Bowl edition of *Sports Spectrum* magazine will be made available to churches throughout the state. This is a high quality magazine, published six times a year by Discovery House. The special Super Bowl edition will feature several of Atlanta's most notable Christian athletes. They will be discussing topics relevant to the needs of our present society. The magazines could be coupled with a brochure or a newsletter of your local church to serve as an effective outreach tool. Those interested in additional information about how to become involved in the Super Bowl witness should call Quest Atlanta at 404-875-2049 or Dr. Gerald Harris at 404-447-1190 or write to Dr. Harris at 4480 Peachtree Corners Circle, Norcross, GA 30092.

CONFERENCE COMMENTS:

Associate Conference Minister:

"What shall we then say of these things ... ?"

Southeast Conference moves along in its own unique way ... raising questions, creating anxieties and frustrations in some few instances, and touching the hearts of even the most faithful with small traces of doubt. No other Conference

among the thirty-nine across the United Church of Christ world is quite like ours. For example, we stretch thinly and tautly like a rubber garment across nearly 420,000 square miles of interstate territory including Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and parts of South Carolina, Florida, and Mississippi. To change the analogy, one could say we seem “too big for our britches” when we consider the vast program and mission priority areas we must cover at times with our relatively meager resources of funding and leadership. I think our dilemma is often similar to mine ... when I am called to decide whether I must either get a larger size or lose weight. Let us look briefly and frankly at our options in but a sampling of selected areas.

Start with the challenges and opportunities relating to evangelism and church development. Beginning in the year 1990, we took upon ourselves the splendid goal of developing, and supporting the development, and supporting the development of, at least fifteen new churches. The view now is that our hearts were truly in the right place even though we miscalculated the growth potentials in some individual cases. *“What then shall we say of these things?”* The actual rate of growth for some of these church starts, and the attempts to stretch the dollars we initially put aside for these projects are not matching the realities we face in this very critical area of our Conference mission and ministry. Do we lose weight or go to the larger size of effort?

Then we have the problems arising in part out of our diversities of ethnic and racial characteristics, our sectional backgrounds of Southern and Northern upbringings, and our biblical, theological, and philosophical orientations. Shall we split up into camps of ethnic purity, stake out our ground under different regional flags, and divide God’s word cafeteria style ... where each can pick and choose what is deemed most tasteful or nourishing to them? We do have our problems and they are unique to our situation. This is not intended as a sermon, but when applied to our ongoing life and work together as a unique Conference community of God, the Bible passage from Romans 8:31 does seem appropriate and timely. We are challenged in various ways and perhaps not exactly like any other Conference. Do we lose the extraordinary weight of our priorities for mission and ministry, or do we go up to the next larger size of commitment and service?

In some ways it can be scary, causing us to be overly cautious or to compromise in our commitments to do what we intend to do. There is a view expressed among some highly regarded theologians that true faith is essentially an active obedience to our calling to be the people of God ... the followers of Jesus Christ. Out of this obedience comes strength undergirded by an assurance that, “If God be for us, who can be against us!”

Mitchell C. Johnson

National Board Meets in SEC’s “Fair” City of Savannah

The United Church Board for Homeland Ministries Corporation picked Savannah, GA as site for its Annual Meeting this year, October 28-November 1. Corporate Board members and the UCBHM Staff met downtown in one of the

“fairest” of our Southern cities rich with significant national history and UCC church tradition in and around Georgia. Southeast Conference felt honored by the choice of such a meeting place in our region. Mrs. Mary Cooper Marshall, Montgomery, Alabama and Dr. Richard C. Braun, Pleasant Hill, Tennessee, respectively, are members of the board of directors and corporate members, and were in attendance in Savannah. Dr. William S. Jackson of Atlanta is also a member of the Corporate Board. Rev. Robert Sherard, First Church, Savannah; Rev. Robert Cox, Midway Church, Midway; Rev. Susan Hull, Circular Church, Charleston; and Rev. James Fields, Plymouth Church, Charleston were on the planning committee for the meeting.

Rev. Lester Ariail and wife, Anne, from Macon, Georgia were in Savannah to welcome the participants with a very creative table display of Southeast Conference life and service which they prepared. Rev. Mitchell Johnson, Associate Conference Minister, represented the Conference in extending personal greetings to the visitors.

United Church Board for World Ministries

Great concern is being expressed by UCC leadership over recent anti-immigrant sentiment, both at home and in countries throughout the world.

In California, it is Mexican immigrants. In Florida, in Europe and “in your neck of the woods,” it is whichever ethnic group is most recently arrived and/or is most visible. These groups get the blame for destroying the “quality of life” for others.

Ron Romero, General Secretary, Mission Program, UCBWM, writes: “After three weeks in California and a steady bombardment of anti-immigrant sentiment, I am moved to send you this plea that we find a way as ecumenical partners to counteract this growing hysteria. In the late 1970s the UCC formed a national immigration task group that responded to a very similar atmosphere by developing a comprehensive General Synod pronouncement and strategy for the distribution of information and resources to local congregations. The issues may be very similar but the world has changed considerably. This so-called post-Cold War period has unleashed a global phenomenon of nationalism and mean-spiritedness toward displaced persons who are often the most vulnerable in any society.

Our churches and ecumenical partners all over the world have a rich history of responding to the needs of refugees and immigrants, a history that emerges out of our Christian commitment to justice and to the spirit of openness and hospitality to the “stranger” that we find throughout the scriptures. I hope we can build upon that legacy of inspiration and provide an ointment of love that may help heal a troubled world.

I do not have a plan of action to offer you at the moment, but would value both information and ideas on how we might further network on this issue together, supporting one another in an atmosphere that I fear will only escalate during these days of profound economic shifts.

*Contact: Ron Romero, General Secretary, Mission Program, UCBWM, 475
Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115*

Over 200 Women Gather in Biloxi

October 8th through the 10th, over 200 women gathered at the Seashore Methodist Assembly in Biloxi, Mississippi for the biennial Southern Regional UCC Women's Meeting. Nearly fifty women from the Southeast Conference were present, including the keynote speaker, Rev. Joyce Myers-Brown of Atlanta, whose message, "Them Bones Gonna Rise Again" was both inspiring and challenging.

One of the highlights of the meeting was a visit to Back Bay Mission and the moving presentations from women who have been empowered by the Mission.

The weekend included worship and study, fun and fellowship. Debbie Douglas of Crossville, Tennessee, led a stimulating workshop on "Elimination of Negative Stereotyping" and Louise Cox of LaFayette, Alabama gave a wonderfully hilarious performance as "Alabama Bombeck."

An invitation was extended to hold the next Regional gathering in October 1995 at Blowing Rock, North Carolina. The Southeast Conference Women's Commission urges women to mark their calendars for that event and for our Southeast Women's Retreat set for October 7-9, 1994 at Shocco Springs near Talladega, Alabama.

Important Message to All SEC Women!

If you have wanted to attend women's retreats in the past, but limited funds prevented your going, assistance IS available.

Throughout the Conference, women are asked to set aside five cents a day (\$18.25 per year) for the purpose of maintaining a scholarship fund, known as the "Women's Mite." The scholarship is then used to assist women who cannot attend retreats due to lack of funds. Since 1990, the Women's Mite Committee has given approval for assistance to approximately twenty women.

Guidelines, remittance forms and applications are available from the Chairperson shown below. Remember, applications should be sent in early enough to be received at least two weeks in advance of the date of the vent that you wish to attend.

Now, perhaps you never knew that such a scholarship existed and would like to begin making contributions to this very worthwhile project. If so, you may send your contribution to Southeast Conference Office, Attention: Women's Mite, 756 W. Peachtree St. N.W., Atlanta, GA 30308. Applications should be sent to Kathryn Robinson, Chairperson, 828 46th Street North, Birmingham, AL 35212. Phone: 205/591/1696.

Planners Gather for Action

Program and Planning leaders across the Southeast Conference came together at Pilgrim Church in Birmingham Friday and Saturday, November 12-13. They had one purpose in mind: to get the 1993-94 program year off to a good start! They began with team-building activities on Friday evening, including a light meal, devotional service and orientation. The session continued the next day starting with breakfast, through the noon meal and wrap-up.

Both newly elected and continuing leaders from the respective associations of the Conference were present to share their experience and their creativity around making sure that the purposes and goals adopted for our ongoing missions and ministries are achieved with God's help.

Rev. Richard Sales, Program Committee Chair for the Conference, sponsored the event at the host church where he is senior pastor. Rev. Frances Bryant-Lowery led the devotions and worship activities that set the tone for a very meaningful and inspirational gathering. On hand also were Dr. Erna Bryant, Moderator of the Conference, and Rev. Mitchell Johnson, Associate and Acting Conference Minister.

REMEMBER!

When you are planning your programming, The Resource Center at the Conference Office has videos, films, books, etc. Call us! 404/607-1993

Council for Higher Education of the UCC

Dear Friends,

Last year it was great to see the piles grow high of lists of high school juniors from our churches all across the country ... along with special notes, greetings and questions from a number of you.

Over 4,800 names of UCC students were made available to the 29 admissions offices for their spring outreach. From what I hear, the UCC-related colleges' catalogues were often first to reach the homes of these students, before the major deluge which fills the mailboxes of juniors each Spring.

Often, as I visit churches or attend meetings, you and adults ask about the colleges/universities. Others are unaware that there are UCC-related colleges and universities. Both private and public higher education offer important and different options, but without information on these schools, people won't have a choice.

So, THANKS for your world. And ... here it is that time again. We invite your very necessary assistance in identifying students who might like information about the 29 colleges/universities OR the 15 seminaries who make up the Council for Higher Education. There are two forms to be used for your response. These forms may be requested from the Council for Higher Education of the UCC, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115-1100, or by calling (216) 736-3800.

We appreciate your role in helping us get this information to the juniors in your congregation. Please respond as soon as you can, early this fall if possible—though we can accept lists on into January.

From Mitzi N. Ellis, Coordinator of Church-College Relations

New Church Adopts New Name

Back in May of this year, the Chattanooga United Church officially adopted its permanent name ... Sheares Memorial United Church of Christ, after the late Dr. Reuben A. Sheares III.

Dr. Sheares was a pioneer in the UCC, a visionary who believed very deeply in the ecumenical church. But what matters most about his legacy to the UCC is that he was an exemplary African-American pastor who shared his heritage and pride with great joy. He understood that sharing the rich traditions of African-Americans could be done in an inclusive, open, affirming way. And that the church can (and should) be the place where persons of every race and ethnicity can come together as part of the body of Christ.

It is both appropriate and fitting that Sheares Memorial United Church of Christ should be so named.

Lanett Church Laywoman Honored

Vickie Looser, of Lanett, Alabama Congregational Christian Church, was honored this year as 1st runner-up in the Alabama Council for the Social Studies; 1993 Teacher of the Year Award. This award is given annually to three outstanding Social Studies teachers in Alabama. The awards were presented in the AEA Convention on March 30th at the Montgomery Civic Center. In April, the City Council of Lanett honored Vickie with a resolution in recognition of this award.

Vickie grew up in LaGrange, Georgia and was a member of the Hillside Christian Church, where her mother still attends. She graduated from West Georgia College and received her Master's degree from Auburn University. She has taught school in LaGrange, in Valley and Lanett for 16 years. She is presently teaching at Lanett High School where her husband, Charles, is a counselor and biology teacher. The Loosers have a son, Andrew. Vickie is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Herman Beard of LaGrange.

At Lanett Church, Vickie is the church clerk and chairperson of the Board of Christian Education. She was the Laywoman of the Year, chosen by the Men's Fellowship of the East Alabama-West Georgia Association.

CHURCH AND PEOPLE NOTES

The Midway Congregational Church, Midway, Georgia, conducted its revival on Sunday, November 14 thru Wednesday, November 17. The preacher was the Rev. Chestina Archibald, Chaplain at Fisk University at Nashville, TN. The pastor, Rev. Robert Cox, and the members of Midway church were joined by other ministers and churches of the local and adjacent communities. This intensive effort

brought the enlightenment and inspiration of God's word and truth to the community as part of an intentional outreach program.

Flood Report ... When the van pulled out from Pleasant Hill the early part of November, headed toward the flood-damaged areas of Iowa, Rev. Roger Knight, our Conference Minister, was among the willing workers aboard. This stalwart team of good neighbors took this journey of faith and love, arranged and coordinated by Trudy Braun, our Iowa Conference liaison person. No-o-o ... they did not clear up all the flood damage, but their presence as good neighbors was surely an inspiration to those who welcomed and received help.

Rev. Karl Whiteman ... installed as pastor at First United Church UCC in Belvidere, TN, October 10, 1993.

Rev. David Tolbert ... ordained at his home church, Church of the Savior, Knoxville, TN, October 24, 1993.

Rev. Renae Koehler ... installed as associate pastor at Pilgrim Congregational Church, Birmingham, AL, November 7, 1993.

Rev. John Gill ... has accepted the call to pastor the Church of the Savior, Knoxville, TN, as of November 22, 1993.

Watch for "*thoughts*" written by Rev. Susan Virginia Hull, Circular Congregational Church, Charleston, SC, which will appear each week in December, January and February in the UCC Bulletin Series.

The following are excerpts from various SEC UCC church newsletters received by your editor. If your church produces a monthly or quarterly newsletter, please add my name to your mailing list.

SERVICE OF ORDINATION

The ordination service for Marcia Graham was held at the United Church of Huntsville, Alabama on Saturday, August 21st. A reception followed the service of worship. Best wishes to Marcia upon entering the Christian ministry.

PASTOR KURTZ ACCEPTS CALL

In November, Pastor Bob Kurtz began his duties as pastor of the St. John's United Church of Christ in Cullman, Alabama. Pastor Kurtz was formerly with the First United Church in Nashville, Tennessee.

CLOWN MINISTRY

Pilgrimage United Church of Christ in Marietta, Georgia has began a Clown Ministry, being especially involved in mission. Once a month the clowns go to Scottish Rite Children's Hospital and visit in the room of every patient. Some of the clowns have visited Kennestone Hospital in Marietta. This is an important outreach.

120TH ANNIVERSARY

The First United Church UCC of Belvidere, Tennessee celebrated its 120th anniversary and homecoming in August of this year.

CONFERENCE CALENDAR, 1993-94

1993

Dec. 04 James Fother Ordination, Howard UCC, Nashville, TN
Dec. 11 Make-A-Difference! Cluster Leaders Meeting

1994

Jan. 21-22 Board of Directors Meeting (or Jan. 28-29)
Feb. 06-12 UCC Women's Week – observed in local churches
Mar. 04-06 Southern Region Orientation Session for new UCC
Curriculum: Word Among Us – Simpsonwood
Mar. 19-23 Jim Nelson Visit – "Sexuality"
Mar. 25-26 Board of Directors Meeting (may be changed)
Jun. 03-05 Annual Meeting of SEC, St. John's UCC – Cullman, AL
Jul. 02-06 Faith Works – Harry Manon, Conference Coordinator, Purdue
University, West Lafayette, IN
Aug. 07-13 Iowa/SEC Youth Leadership Training Camp
Sep. 09-10 AL/TN Association Annual Meeting
Sep. 16-17 GA/SC Association Annual Meeting
Sep. 23-24 Board of Directors Meeting
Oct. 01 SAL/NWFL Association Annual Meeting
Oct. 07-09 Southeast Women's Retreat – Shocco Springs, Talladega, AL
Oct. 15 EAL Association Annual Meeting

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Moderator, Dr. Erna Bryant
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